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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS:EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM

1. LEBANON. A GROUP OF MILITARY OFFICERS, LED BY SUNNI MUSLIM BRIGADIER GENERAL ABD AL-AZIZ AL-AHDAB, ATTEMPTED TO SEIZE POWER ON MARCH 11. AHDAB PUBLICLY DEMANDED THAT PRESIDENT FRANGIE AND THE GOVERNMENT RESIGN WITHIN 24 HOURS AND INSTRUCTED PARLIAMENT TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT TO REPLACE FRANGIE WITHIN 7 DAYS.

2. AHDAB CLAIMS TO HAVE THE BACKING OF THE CHRISTIAN ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND OF ALL IMPORTANT ARMY UNITS. IN FACT, ALTHOUGH MANY HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS HAVE OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS PRESSED FRANGIE TO TAKE MORE ASSERTIVE ACTION TO STOP THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE ARMY, NONE HAVE YET PUBLICLY SUPPORTED AHDAB, WAITING INSTEAD TO JUDGE PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS, (WHICH EMBASSY BEIRUT BELIEVES ARE IMPROVING).

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3. FRANGIE CONDEMNED THE ACTIONS OF AHDAB AND VOWED THAT

HE WILL FIGHT TO STAY IN OFFICE. FRANGIE IS GUARDED BY MARONITE CHRISTIAN TROOPS IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE OUTSIDE BEIRUT.

4. MARONITE LEADERS MET MARCH 12 AT PARTRIARCH'S RESIDENCE AND REPORTEDLY AGREED THAT FRANGIEMUST GO. THEY AND PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTIES ARE SEARCHING FOR FORMULA THAT WILL PRESERVE APPEARANCE OF CONSTITUTIONALITY, PRESUMABLY BY HAVING PRESIDENT APPOINT MILITARY CABINET AND THEN RESIGN. ATTITUDE OF MAJOR CHRISTIAN PARTIES NOT YET ENTIRELY CLEAR. A KEY WILL BE PHALANGE WHICH HAS NOT YET REACHED DECISION, BUT REPORTEDLY IS LEANING TOWARDS AHDAB.

5. MAJOR MUSLIM POLITICAL LEADERS, INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER KARAMI, HAVE WITHHELD COMMENT, PRESUMABLY WAITING TO SEE WHO ENDS UP ON TOP AND WHAT ACTIONS THE SYRIANS WILL TAKE. THE ONLY IMPORTANT MUSLIM OR LEFTIST TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT SO FAR, KAMAL JUMBLATT CONDEMNED ALL COUPS BUT VOICED SUPPORT FOR FRANGIE RESIGNATION.

6. SYRIA APPEARS TO BE ALLOWING EVENTS TO TAKE THEIR COURSE IN EXPECTATION AHDAB WILL SUCCEED. SAIQA UNITS ARE RINGING BEIRUT AIRPORT TO PROTECT PRO-COUP AIRFORCE UNIT THERE, BUT SAIQA REPORTEDLY WILL INTERVENE ONLY IF DEVELOPMENTS HARMFUL TO SYRIAN INTERESTS OCCUR. PLO, ESPECIALLY FATAH, IS HEAVILY INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING AHDAB. PLO AND SYRIA APPEAR TO BE PREPARED JOINTLY TO RESTRAIN FOLLOWERS OF MUSLIM ARMY DESERTER LT. KHATIB.

7. THE OCCUPATION OF SEVERAL LEBANESE ARMY INSTALLATIONS BY MUSLIM DESERTERS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON THE PAST WEEK PROMPTED ISRAELI FORCES ALONG THE BORDER TO GO ON INCREASED ALERT ON MARCH 11. THE ADDITIONAL UNCERTAINTY OF THE BEIRUT GOVERNMENT WILL HEIGHTEN ISRAELI SCRUTINY OF EVENTS IN LEBANON, BUT ISRAEL IS UNLIKELY TO INTERVENE DIRECTLY EVEN IF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS SEIZED BY AHDAB, WHO IS A GENERALLY CONSERVATIVE

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MUSLIM.

8. DESPITE ISRAEL'S CAUTIOUS APPROACH SO FAR, THE POTENTIAL FOR AN ARMED CLASH INVOLVING ISRAELI TROOPS IN LEBANON WILL REMAIN FAIRLY HIGH IF THE ISRAELIS CONTINUE TO PATROL AS AGGRESSIVELY AS THEY HAVE OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. ISRAELI TROOPS HAVE MADE AT LEAST THREE CROSS-BORDER RAIDS INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON SINCE

FEBRUARY 26. (CONFIDENTIAL)

9. ISRAEL. ARABS IN THE ISRAELI-OCCUPIED WEST BANK HAVE REACTED SHARPLY TO STEPS TAKEN BY ISRAELI SECURITY FORCES TO PUT DOWN STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS PROTESTING AGAINST THE CLAIM OF JEWS TO PRAY ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT AND ADDITIONAL JEWISH SETTLEMENTS IN THE REGION. SEVERAL MUNICIPAL COUNCILS HAVE RESIGNED IN WHAT THE JERUSALEM POST CALLS THE WORST CRISIS IN THE WEST BANK SINCE 1967. WHILE THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IS SEEKING TO HOLD THE LINE AGAINST SUCH PRAYERS AND SETTLEMENTS, TEL AVIV'S CREDIBILITY WITH THE ARABS IS LOW BECAUSE IT HAS GIVEN IN TO JEWISH RELIGIOUS PRESSURES IN THE PAST. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

10. EGYPT. RELATIONS WITH LIBYA CONTINUE TO DETERIORATE OVER LIBYA'S ATTEMPTS TO APPREHEND TWO LEADING MEMBERS OF ITS REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND COUNCIL LIVING IN EXILE SINCE THEIR IMPLICATION IN AN ABORTIVE COUP AGAINST QADHAFI LAST AUGUST. LIBYAN AGENTS WERE RECENTLY ARRESTED IN ROME AND CAIRO ON CHARGES OF PLANNING TO ABDUCT THE TWO EXILES.

11. EGYPT ACCUSED LIBYA OF DEPORTING 3,000 OF THE ESTIMATED 300,000 EGYPTIANS LIVING IN LIBYA AND RETALIATED BY ARRESTING 20 MORE LIBYAN "SABOTEURS." CAIRO, NEVERTHELESS, SEEMS TO BETRYING TO DEFUSE THE CONTROVERSY. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

12. SYRIA. PRESIDENT ASAD LEAVES FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO FRANCE ON MARCH 15. HE HOPES TO USE THE VISIT TO BOOST HIS PRESTIGE IN THE WEST. PRO FORMA
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CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ACCORDS MAY BE SIGNED, BUT NO MAJOR ARMS DEAL IS LIKELY.

13. DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN FRENCH AND SYRIAN LEADERS WILL PROBABLY TOUCH ONLY SUPERFICCIALLY ON THE ISSUE OF ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. ASAD MAY, HOWEVER, ENCOURAGE THE FRENCH TO BECOME MORE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. HE MAY ALSO SOUND OUT PARIS ABOUT TAKING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION BACK TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL WHEN THE MANDATE FOR UN OBSERVER FORCES ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS COMES UP FOR RENEWAL IN LATE MAY. (CONFIDENTIAL)

14. SAUDI ARABIA. SAUDI ARABIA AND THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF YEMEN (PDRY) IS USED A JOINT

STATEMENT ON MARCH 10 ANNOUNCING AN AGREEMENT TO
"NORMALIZE" RELATIONS. THE BRIEF COMMUNIQUE
ACCOMPANYING THE ANNOUNCEMENT DECLARED

THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES WOULD REFRAIN FROM INTERVENING
IN THE OTHER'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CALLED FOR AN
END TO "FOREIGN INTERFERENCE" IN THE ARABIAN
PENINSULA. THE MOVE IS THE RESULT OF MORE THAN
18 MONTHS OF EGYPTIAN AND SAUDI EFFORTS TO TRY
TO WEAN PDRY AWAY FROM ITS COMMUNIST AND RADICAL
ALLIES, WHICH INCLUDE THE USSR, LIBYA, AND IRAQ.

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